6: Taylor E-5 (1930-1937) 1938
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THE CARIBS OF DOMINICA

By Douglas Taylor

Introduction

As the last direct descendants of those first-found "American Redskins," the Island Arawak and the conquering Island Carib, the Caribs of Dominica possess an unique historical and sentimental interest. Today, in fact, they are the only indigenous "Indians" to be found in all the West Indian chain between the Guianas and Florida. Owing, no doubt, to the rugged nature of their homeland, they have outlived their cousins of the other Caribbees (with the partial exception of St. Vincent) by some 200 years. But at last their course is run, and they are fast disappearing. Of their story little is known and less written; and it is with the purpose of recording, before it becomes too late, something of this vestige of a once virile and powerful people, that my own attempt at knowing them has been made.

Dominica was discovered on Columbus' second voyage, and was so named by him for its being first sighted on Sunday, November 3, 1493. In a letter dated 1494, Diego Chanca, the fleet's doctor, gives its native name as Cayré, though this may have been a confusion with the Arawak term for island or land in general—kaera, as in Turukaera for Guadeloupe, and Iwannakaera for Martinique. However, the population was then of too warlike a nature, and the Caribbees of too little value in the Spaniards' eyes, to warrant any serious attempts at settlement. It is therefore not until well into the seventeenth century that we get any reliable reports—this time from the French missionary fathers—of the Carib Islanders.

Father Raymond Breton spent nearly 25 years among the Caribs of Dominica, and wrote subsequently a Carib dictionary, a grammar, and a translation of the usual prayers, together with a catechism in their tongue. Under the various headings of the dictionary he gives a concise description of the local beliefs, customs, and arts, as well as of the flora and fauna of the island, domestic utensils, weapons, etc. While he deplores what he naturally considers the Caribs' moral laxity in certain respects (drink, women, and especially their insensibility or indifference to the call of religion; he succeeded, he himself tells us, during his 25 years of zeal, in converting only "quelques enfants

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KINSHIP AND SOCIAL STRUCTURE OF THE ISLAND CARIB

DOUGLAS TAYLOR

PAST AND PRESENT

[121] THE RESPECTIVE ROLES of Carib and Arawak tribes in shaping the social organization and general culture of the northeast tropical forest area of South America appear to constitute a moot point which is far from settled. Any evidences of acculturation from the islands where these two stocks are known to have met and mingled should therefore be of interest. While I have [127] been obliged to rely in the main, for the purposes of the present paper, upon historical material, comparisons have been made wherever this was possible with conditions obtaining today among the Carib remnant in Dominica. Moreover, it is hoped that the tentative interpretation of the kinship terms and of their social implications will not be without value.

[101] The Island Caribs, says Breton,[1] called themselves Callínago, and were called by their womenfolk Callíponam. Further, he gives this very interesting note:

> *Galíbi*, Caraïbes de terre ferme. J'ay enfin appris des Capitaines de la Dominique, que les mots de Galíbi, et Caraïbe estoient des noms que les Européens leur avoient donnez, et que leur véritable nom estoit *Callínago*, qu'ils ne se distinguoient que par ces mots *Oubaóbouam*, *Baloüébouam*, c'est à dire, des Isles, ou de terre ferme, que les insulaires estoient des Galíbis de terre ferme, qui s'estoient détachez du continent pour conquester les Isles, que le Capitaine qui les avoit conduits estoit petit de corps, mais grand en courage, qu'il mangeoit peu, et beuvoit encore moins, qu'il avait exterminé tous les naturels du païs, à la reserve des femmes, qui ont toujours gardé quelque chose de leur langue, que pour conserver la memoire de ces conquestes il avoit fait porter les testes des ennemis (que les François ont trouvez) dans les antres des rochers qui sont sur le bord de la mer, afin que les peres les fissent voir à leurs enfans et successivement à tous les autres qui descendroient de leur posterité. Ils m'ont dit qu'ils avoient eu des Rois, que le mot *aboüyou* estoit le nom de ceux qui les portoient sur leurs épaules, et que les Caraïbes qui avoient leur carbet au pied de la soufrière de la Dominique, au delá d'Amichon estoient descendus d'eux, mais je ne leur demanday pas si leurs Rois avoient commencez dès ce Capitaine qui avoit conquis les Isles, et quád ils ont cessez de regner.

Today the older Caribs say that their tribe's name is kàrìnáꝑ (ꝑ representing a bilabial voiceless spirant), and have quite forgotten the other term; but

1 (R. P.) Raymond Breton, *Dictionnaire Caraïbe-François* (Auxerre, 1665); *Dictionnaire François-Caraïbe* (1666); *Grammaire Caraïbe* (1667).

13: Hodge & Taylor N, E-5 (1930-1956) 1957
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THE ETHNOBOTANY OF THE ISLAND CARIBS OF DOMINICA [1]

I. INTRODUCTION

One of the earliest contacts between North America and South America was made almost certainly by way of the West Indies. Precolonial records of men and materials from these islands are therefore of unique interest to the Americanist. Unfortunately now when it is possible to investigate primitive Antillean societies we find that we are too late, for the aborigines have nearly all disappeared. Nor can we rely on the early chroniclers of this region (15) (35) (42) for their bulky writings are filled not with valuable notes of native «curiosities» but rather with lengthy accounts of their own personal problems.

Where local terrain in the West Indies permitted white settlement and exploitation much of the native flora and fauna, including man himself, disappeared. Among such elements was the Island Carib. Like other Indian groups of the Antilles he was naturally opposed to the adoption of the sort of production organized solely for the enrichment of white men. With the Carib went many of the plant products that he used for food and drink, shelter, comfort and adornment, medicines and charms. These native species were for the most part replaced by imported species which had proved of greater commercial value to the invader. Fortunately among the Antilles there proved to be at least one sanctuary, the island of Dominica.

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[1] The British West Indian island of Dominica, sometimes confused with the Dominican Republic in Hispaniola, is one of the Lesser Antilles and is located between 15°-10′ – 15°-40′ north latitude and 61°-44′ – 61°-30′ west longitude, more or less equidistant between the French islands of Guadeloupe and Martinique.

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137 declined in numbers. Many of the more desirable species are *arbres de chasse*, the distribution of their fruits aided by native doves and forest pigeons. The extinction of such « hunter's trees » tends to reduce the avian population. The inevitable result is a depletion of both fauna and flora.

177 All these are signs that Dominica may no longer continue to be a natural West Indian reservoir of wild life. The Caribs are also in danger. Negro infiltration and the coming to the Indian Reserve of a church, of a school, and of a police station have led not only to the abandonment of the Carib language but also to the loss of much of the tribe's stock of nature-lore.

The opening up of new land has pushed the forest much farther from the Caribs' homes than it was even thirty years ago. Difficulty in obtaining from the forest those raw materials needed in basketry and in dugout canoe building has brought about a gradual decline of these and allied crafts. One result is that the [241] Caribs now have more time to spend tending imported crops planted in their provision grounds. These gardens, like all others in Dominica, are cultivated without deep digging or manuring on the primitive system of clearing and burning the forest, gathering one or two crops, and moving farther afield. Another result [224] of the retreat of the forest is a decrease in the number of hunters. These men were naturally the best acquainted with those wild plants which could be of use while in the woods. Moreover many « medicines » and vegetable « charms » were operative for success in the chase; and the knowledge of the virtues of such plants [824] remained the property of individual hunters or of their families. The loss of the hunter class has thus meant the loss of much plant-lore.

177 The addition of an extension to the Imperial Road (the principal high road of Dominica), which now practically cuts the island in 49| two, will probably complete the process of culture disintegration and of forest disintegration. With these will go still more of the plant-lore and, as elsewhere in the West Indies, the road system may even lead to the extinction of many interesting species.

121 From the above it is easy to see that an ethnobotanical paper on the Island Carib is timely. The value of ethnobotany as an aid in tracing the origin and migrations of peoples and in ex-

[text continues on p. 518 - Ann/pt]

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121 plaining changes in their social structure is universally recognized by ethnologists today. In an article on American culture history LOWIE recently wrote (36): « Another interesting question is how far the Southeast of the United States has been influenced by the Amazon-Orinoco area via the West Indies ». Further on he mentions the lack of published botanical data dealing with such plants as maize, manioc, and the species supplying fish poisons.

It is the hope of the present authors that at least some of the plant-lore of the Island Caribs may be permanently recorded in this publication. The aim of this paper is to provide accurate botanical and ethnographical information about species gathered or cultivated by the Caribs of Dominica not only today but also (as far as possible) in the past. Certain modern commercial crops — such as limes, oranges, and vanilla — which play a part in Carib economy today have been excluded. It is not claimed that all the species included in our list were found growing in the islands at the time of their discovery, for indeed a number of them are of Old World origin. The origin of such species is stated in the enumeration of plants.

II. HISTORICAL NOTES

101 174 At the time of the Spanish Conquest, the Greater Antilles and the Bahamas were dominated by an Arawakan-speaking people with a stratified society and a religious cult involving priests and idols. These *Taínos*, as they have been called, practised horticulture and made pottery, as did also another, more warlike people called *Maçoriges* or *Ciguayos*, who occupied a part of north-eastern Hispaniola, but about whom little else is known. Nor can much be said about the primitive *Siboneyes* or *Guanahatabeyes*, of whom only a few then remained in the western extremity of Cuba, except that they — unlike other inhabitants of the West Indian islands — had probably come from North America rather than from South America, and still had a non-horticultural and pre-ceramic culture.

191 198 The Lesser Antilles, from Tobago in the south to Vieques in the north-west, were then occupied by a people called *Kariphuna* or *Island-Carib*, about whom the most widely known fact is that they all used two distinct languages : a « women's speech » belonging to the same linguistic stock (Arawakan) as did Taino, and a « men's speech » belonging to the Cariban family of languages. It is less generally known that, by the middle of the seventeenth century when these languages first were recorded, the latter had degenerated to a jargon in the sense that it could not be used for ordinary communication without resort to a host of grammatical words and affixes belonging to the « women's speech », which was in fact the first language of male and female alike. The